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P 061430Z MAR 07
FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8459
INFO RUEHZM/GCC COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD 0819
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 1762
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 1025
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1368
RHWSMRC/USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL
RUEHKU/OMC-K KUWAIT KU

UNCLAS KUWAIT 000332

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE, SIPDIS

STATE FOR AIAG, NEA/ARP, NEA/RA; CAIRO FOR LINDA LOGAN
AMMAN FOR WHITTLESEY

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [AMED](#) [CASC](#) [KSCA](#) [SENV](#) [TBIO](#) [KU](#)
SUBJECT: KUWAIT AVIAN FLU UPDATE #4

Ref: Kuwait 305 and previous

¶1. (SBU) On March 6, Post convened a second meeting of its Avian Influenza Working Group (AIWG), which includes U.S. military health officials from local bases, to discuss recent developments in the outbreak of avian influenza in Kuwait. The number of confirmed cases has slowed considerably in recent days, and now stands at a total of 51, according to the GOK health officials. Press reports indicate that up to 25,000 birds have been culled by the Public Authority for Agriculture and Fish Resources (PAAAFR), although the numbers reported vary widely. The PAAAFR is continuing to quarantine affected areas, and is deploying avicide pellets to limit the interaction of migratory birds with locally kept birds. ARCENT health officials noted that PAAAFR is following recommended World Health Organization (WHO) procedures and expressed satisfaction with the GOK's handling of the outbreak so far. They said that ARCENT's suspension of egg purchases from Kuwaiti producers continues.

¶2. (SBU) Medoff noted that the GOK is treating more than 200 people in the affected area with prophylactic doses of Tamiflu, despite all tests for infection being negative. Medoff expressed concern that administering Tamiflu in the absence of confirmed cases could be an irresponsible use of Kuwait's limited Tamiflu stocks. In response to reports that WHO experts are currently in Kuwait, Medoff will try to make contact with them to ask for their assessment of the GOK response. Thus far the WHO has not officially declared Kuwait an affected country, despite Kuwaiti press reports, but if or when that designation occurs other nations may ban the import of Kuwaiti poultry. (Note: Qatar and Oman have already instituted bans.)

¶3. (SBU) Both Embassy and ARCENT officers agreed on the importance of remaining in close contact with PAAAFR officials such as Dr. Farida Al-Mulla, despite their heavy workload and numerous demands on their time. Because the number of new cases has slowed considerably, the AIWG agreed to reconvene on March 20, unless events warrant an earlier meeting.

¶4. (SBU) American citizens in Kuwait appear to be taking the AI outbreak in stride, with no particular expressions of concern or reaction following the February 28 release of the mission's warden message.

¶5. (U) The AIWG invited a representative from the British Embassy to attend this and future meetings. The British representative was not able to attend this meeting.

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